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VIVIEN - Victim Violence Educational Network  
*An educational project to improve the ability to assist women victims of violence*

## REPORT ON THE BEST PRACTICE “FUNDACIÓN CERMI MUJERES” – SPAIN (Madrid)

<http://www.fundacioncermimujeres.es/en>

### General description of the Centre

CERMI Women's Foundation is a Spanish non-profit organization created in 2014 by the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI), the umbrella body for the disability movement in Spain, to advocate for the full exercise of all human rights and fundamental liberties by women and girls with disabilities in the country, a population of approximately two and a half million citizens.

The Foundation operates a Council for Participation of Women with Disabilities as a consultative instrument to give direct voice to all women and girls with disabilities in Spain through their representative organizations, both disabled people's organizations and specific organizations of women with disabilities. The Council has, inter alia, the following functions: it is consulted in advance and counsels the Foundation in all matters when required; promoting the exchange of experiences, debates and discussions on the social reality of

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women and girls with disabilities, as well as of mothers and female caregivers of persons with disabilities; suggesting and proposing the drafting of studies and research; and formulating those proposals and recommendations as are deemed necessary.

The purposes of CERMI Women's Foundation (FCM according to the initials in Spanish for Fundación CERMI Mujeres) are the following:

1. Taking a social and human-rights based approach, foster conditions such that women and girls with disabilities with different identities and from different social backgrounds, as well as mothers and women assistants of persons with disabilities, may enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms fully and equally;

2. Advocate for effective equality for women and girls with disabilities from a human rights perspective and by putting into practise the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, while paying particular attention to the principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunities, inclusion in the community, independent living and positive action;

3. Observe the social reality of effective equality for women and girls with disabilities from a human rights perspective, following the provisions of the Convention on the

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Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, and in particular those provisions which are instrumental in achieving recognition of their rights and equal opportunities, proposing positive action measures and improving their living conditions and citizenship status;

4. Promote individual and collective empowerment by women and girls with disabilities;

5. Actively seek partnerships with the mainstream feminist movement and the third social action sector, as well as with regional, national, European and international public authorities, political parties and social operators, in all activities related to the social inclusion of women and girls with disabilities and mothers and women assistants of persons with disabilities;

6. Assist, work hand in hand and provide operational support to the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI), the founding and supporting entity of the CERMI Women's Foundation, in achieving its social purposes in relation to enhancing and extending the rights, inclusion and social welfare of women and girls with disabilities and the effective application of the principle of equal treatment in the social disability movement;

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7. Promote initiatives in international co-operation towards ensuring the human rights of women and girls with disabilities, taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Growth.

CERMI Women's Foundation's **mission** is to represent and advocate for women and girls with disabilities and the mothers and female carers of people with disabilities, in order to ensure their rights and inclusion and improve their life conditions and situation as citizens.

CERMI Women's Foundation **operates under the following four principles:**

1. **Intersectional approach:** they adopt an intersectional approach between CRPD and CEDAW, while also taking into consideration other key international human rights instruments, such as the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

2. **Consultations with experts and stakeholders:** all studies, reports, position papers and projects carried out by the Foundation are analyzed and adopted by women and girls with disabilities themselves, as well as mothers and women assistants of persons with disabilities, through the Foundation's Council for Participation, where all organizations of persons with disabilities are represented by the person in charge of gender affairs;

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3. **Grassroots involvement:** FCM works directly with women and girls with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities at grassroots, that is to say with women and girls who are not necessarily part of civil society. We do this by listening to their voices and empowering them to advocate for their human rights and fundamental freedoms;

4. **Partnerships:** FCM creates partnerships with public authorities, civil society, the academic world and the third sector (social action sector).

Although CERMI Women's Foundation was set up specifically to defend and advocate for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls with disabilities, in practice **assisting women with disabilities victims of violence is one of the priority action areas** of the Foundation currently. In fact, **FCM co-operates very closely with the government delegate for gender-based violence.**

FCM is represented on the Spanish State Observatory on Violence against Women. In addition, FCM receives **public funding to deliver a project on legal advice for women with disabilities who fall victim to violence ('Violence Exit')**.

This year, FCM has submitted a project for public funding a proposal to boost the Violence Exit project and a training programs for personal assistants for women with disabilities. They are waiting for a response.

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As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the worrying increase in violence against women with disabilities, FCM has published a guidebook called 'You're not alone' (<https://www.cermi.es/es/actualidad/novedades/gu%C3%ADa-de-orientaciones-pr%C3%A1cticas-de-denuncia-de-la-violencia-de-g%C3%A9nero-sobre>).

As mentioned above, **Spain has a population of approximately two and a half million women and girls with disabilities**, who make up **60.02% of all persons with disabilities in the country**.

Figures from the 2019 macro survey on violence, published just last month by the Ministry for Equality and the Spanish government delegate for GBV, show that **20.7% of all women with disabilities has suffered physical or sexual violence** at the hands of a partner, compared with 13.8% of women without disabilities. In addition, the study shows that 17.5% of the women with disabilities who have fallen victim to physical, sexual or emotional violence or who have at some time been afraid of their partners state that their disability is a consequence of the violence they have suffered (9.8% at the hands of current partners and 19.7% from previous partners).

In terms of employment, the inactivity rate for women with disabilities amounts to 64.8% according to the National Institute for Statistics. The activity rate for women with disabilities

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(33.1%) is lower than the male rate (34.4%) and that of women without disabilities. The unemployment rate of women with disabilities (31.1%) is slightly higher than that of men with disabilities (30.9%). **The employment rate of women with disabilities (22.8%) is very low**, lower than that of their male peers (23.8%) and less than half of the rate for women without a disability (53.8%). In relation to the salary gap, women with disabilities annually receive an average 3,770.20 Euros less than men with disabilities, which means a gap of 18.4%.

The foundation has two full-time staff members, two part-time members of staff, pro bono legal support from a lawyer and occasional support from two consultants, who are hired for specific research projects.

The Executive Vice-President who directs activities; a technical co-ordinator who manages programs and projects; a gender specialist who carries out administrative tasks, runs their social media accounts and organizes events; a part-time administrative assistant who checks easy-to-read versions of documents and provides event support; their senior consultant who holds a PhD in sociology and is a freelance who performs research studies; their junior consultant prepares analytical reports for the Foundation based on other's research outcomes and is an interviewer for our research work; their legal counsel is a lawyer who works pro bono and provides legal advice to women and girls with disabilities. They also have external

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support from two freelance journalists via a communications company – one writes press releases and is in charge of social media, and the other is responsible for the content of their monthly news bulletin. Finally, they also have support from an economist who keeps the accounts and pro bono support for their financial services from ONCE Foundation personnel.

They also hire auditors for certain projects which require an external audit.

The Foundation is a registered social volunteering body. They have support from around 60 volunteers, but their involvement is not stable.

They look for feminists who are familiar with topics concerning disability and are committed to advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. They should be responsible, proactive team workers who are passionate about their work.

The public perception is very positive and they are considered an organization that performs a very useful social role. CERMI Women's Foundation become a benchmark nationally for advocating for the rights of women and girls with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities.

**There are no other centers or foundations like CERMI Women's Foundation in Spain.**

### Training description

CERMI Women's Foundation offers permanent training possibilities on-line and sporadic face-to-face courses. They offer women and girls with disabilities and mothers of

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children with disabilities at grassroots level training on their human rights and fundamental freedoms. They also offer training to relatives of people with disabilities and professionals working in organizations of persons with disabilities.

Thirdly, they offer specialist training for professionals active in different sectors, for instance law enforcement officials, social services, healthcare staff, professionals working in violence against women, etc.

Finally, they provide training and expert advice, among others, to public authorities (local governments, regions and national governments), public-sector bodies and universities. Some of the courses are offered through a dedicated platform and some are face-to-face courses. Currently and due to the pandemic, all our courses are provided on Zoom or other similar on-line platforms.

The trainers are the Executive Vice-President, the co-ordinator, the gender specialist, the senior consultant, the legal counsel, members of the Board of Trustees and other experts (both providing their time and services pro bono).

With reference to the trainees, since the outbreak of the pandemic their courses are open to a wider audience. At present they have participants from an average of 15 countries on their courses and courses for women and girls with disabilities are now open to all women from Ibero-America.

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Regarding duration, their shortest courses last two hours, some are six hours. Normally courses are organized in two-hour sessions.

Generally, they offer courses every week. Courses for women and girls with disabilities take place every fortnight. All courses are free, however, their courses for specific professionals are often paid by the body contracting our services.

*One shared example of the training scheme*

To give just one example, they are organizing a course in partnership with the Spanish Royal Board on Disability which will run during October and November. This course involves six two-hour sessions and focuses on the human rights of women and girls with disabilities in CEDAW, the CRPD, the Beijing Platform for Action, the SDGs, the Istanbul Convention and through individual complaints to UN treaty bodies thanks to optional protocols.

The two-hour sessions are organized as follows:

- 30 minutes – keynote speech
- 30 minutes – questions and answers
- 30 minutes – panel of experts

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30 minutes – questions and answers

They fund the training through calls for proposals issued by public- and private-sector funding bodies.

After the end of the training course, trainees get a certificate if they run the courses in partnership with other bodies which can issue certificates. The Foundation have applied for official recognition as a training center because they cannot issue certificates in the name of the Foundation as yet.

The experts from the system are motivated via social media to join such trainings. Participants from previous courses are motivated to return.

In some case trainees become multipliers in their working environment but this depends on the type of course. For instance, following the courses for women and girls with disabilities the trainees normally encourage other women and girls with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities to attend.

### **Description of the told training experiences (positive and negative)**

The most difficult things they report in the running of on-line courses are the following:

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1. **on-line courses require access to certain minimum resources** (suitable telephone, internet access, etc.). Registration is on-line so access to internet is fundamental. Trainees also need some minimal knowledge of how to use smartphones, computers, and other technologies. They have tried to simplify the process as much as possible, but some people still have difficulties.
2. **Participants with high support needs** to be able to access information and communication technologies have difficulties following the courses. They try to resolve this issue at times by organizing specific courses for these groups, but they think this segregate so they attempt to integrate as much as possible. People with high support needs requires help from a personal assistant, interpreter-guides or an assistant with knowledge of learning difficulties. This makes the courses very expensive and is complicated to arrange given the current restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The Foundation does not have ample human resources but the needs are great, so **they cannot always meet the demand for training.**

In describing an example of training that worked well, they affirm that their '**You're not alone**' webinars are proving to be very popular and successful. The webinars originated to provide support and accompaniment to women and girls with disabilities and mothers of

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children with disabilities. The webinars were originally to give a voice to these groups to express their testimonies, but they now incorporate short (8-minute) presentations on very specific subjects. Approximately 150 women attend each webinar on Zoom from all over Ibero-America to share their experiences and knowledge on topical issues. The videos of all the webinars are available on the following link:

<https://galeriavideos.cermi.es/miniaturas.php>.

Participants find the webinars very useful and said that nobody else was offering anything similar. It seems that the key point that allowed the course to succeed were:

- 1) brevity: presentations are kept short (8 minutes) and the floor is given to participants for a maximum of three minutes;
- 2) personal aspect: personal testimonies which participants can relate to;
- 3) specific space for women with disabilities.

Finally, they affirm that, in order to strengthen their training they would need more financial support to ensure the participation of women requiring higher levels of support to access the information, to be able to provide more personal assistance. Additional financial resources would also enable them to provide all the information in easy-to-read formats and pictogrammes and open up the webinars to women from other language groups by offering simultaneous interpretation.

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